

Remarks

In the final office action dated February 5, 2004 the Examiner objected to the specification, rejected claims 8, 12 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and claims 5-7 and 9-13 as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,099,291 to Lanser (hereinafter Lanser) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,487,557 to Eckhout (hereinafter the Eckhout '557 patent), U.S. Patent No. 5,840,147 to Grimm (hereinafter Grimm), U.S. Patent No. 4,767,298 to Bocchicchio et al. (hereinafter Bocchicchio), and U.S. Patent No. 5,151,149 to Swartz (hereinafter Swartz). Claims 1-4 were previously canceled.

By this amendment, Applicants' representative cancels claims 8 and 13, amends the specification and claims 5, 10 and 12, and adds claims 14-16. The specification has been amended for consistency per the Examiner's suggestion. Support for the amendment to claims 5, 10 and 12 can be found, for example, on Figures 3 and 4, and in the specification on page 4, ll. 11-16, page 7, ll. 16-21, and page 8, l. 22 through page 9, l. 2. Support for new claims 14-16 can be found, for example, in the specification on page 8, ll. 2-5. As such, no new matter has been added.

With respect to the Examiner's objection and rejections, the Examiner is invited to consider the following remarks.

Regarding the rejection of the specification, and claims 8, 12 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, claims 8 and 13 have been canceled, and the specification and claim 12 have been amended to obviate the rejections, and the rejections should be withdrawn.

Regarding the rejection of 5-7 and 9-13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103, amended claims 5 and 10 provide a system of manufacturing an air bag cover assembly including a plastic front panel, a plastic back plate, a switch and infrared-absorbing material, at least one housing having a respective infrared lamp for emitting infrared radiation and an infrared shield for shielding the plastic front panel from the infrared radiation. The at least one infrared lamp emits infrared radiation at the infrared-absorbing material when the infrared-absorbing material is disposed between the at least one infrared lamp, and infrared shield for a time sufficient to heat the

infrared-absorbing material to a desired temperature. The heated infrared-absorbing material bonds the plastic front panel and back plate together when cooled without introducing deformities into outer class A surfaces of the plastic front panel.

Amended claim 12 provides a system of manufacturing an air bag cover assembly including a plastic front panel, a plastic back plate, a switch and infrared-absorbing material, at least one infrared lamp for emitting infrared radiation, and each of the at least one infrared lamps is mounted near the apparatus for heating the infrared-absorbing material such that infrared radiation from the infrared lamps propagates through the back plate and the heated infrared-absorbing material is a heat-activated adhesive that bonds the plastic front panel and back plate together when cooled without introducing deformities into outer class A surfaces of the plastic front panel. The cited references, alone or in combination, fail to provide all of the features of presently pending independent claims, and the rejection should be withdrawn.

In particular, Lanser is directed to a machine for heat staking that utilizes an infrared heat lamp to direct radiant energy onto a plastic stud. In a first embodiment, the lamp is mounted directly above and in coaxial alignment with the staking punch such that the lamp points downward toward the plastic stud. An annular reflector is positioned in a radially surrounding relationship to the stud such that all of the radiant energy emitted by the lamp strikes the reflector and is redirected radially inward onto the stud. In an alternate embodiment, an infrared lamp is mounted on a non-moving portion of the staking press machinery, and one or more fiber-optic cables extend from the lamp to the vicinity of the stud and gather substantially all of the radiant energy produced by the lamp and direct it onto the stud. (Lanser, Abstract). Eckhout is directed to an automotive air bag cover having a decorative applique fastened to the front cover adjacent the seams in a non-overlapping fashion such that the decorative applique does not interfere with exit or inflation of the air bag. (Eckhout, Abstract).

Grimm is directed to a plastic joining method that directs polychromate, non-coherent electromagnetic radiation through a transmitting plastic to an absorbing material that absorbs the radiation with the generation of heat. (Grimm, Abstract). Bocchicchio is directed to an apparatus for heat staking plastic parts to other parts to form an assembly using

multiple heating elements which are arranged in zones and which are separately programmable in terms of temperature and displacement to develop optimum deformation of plastic having different characteristics. (Bocchicchio, Abstract). Swartz is directed to joining thermoplastic parts of indeterminate thickness to each other by application of heat to selected surface areas thereof by intense focused infrared heat lines produced by parabolic-elliptical-reflection heat sources that are displaced by a reciprocating linear actuator. (Swartz, Abstract). As such, Grimm, Bocchicchio and Swartz, taken alone or in combination, fail to cure the deficiencies of the combination of Langer and Eckhout.

The cited references, alone or in any combination, fail to disclose, teach or suggest at least one housing having a respective infrared lamp for emitting infrared radiation and an infrared shield for shielding the plastic front panel from the infrared radiation, where the at least one infrared lamp emits infrared radiation at the infrared-absorbing material when the infrared-absorbing material is disposed between the at least one infrared lamp and infrared shield for a time sufficient to heat the infrared-absorbing material to a desired temperature, and the heated infrared-absorbing material bonds the plastic front panel and back plate together when cooled without introducing deformities into outer class A surfaces of the plastic front panel, as claimed in amended claims 5 and 12. Furthermore, the cited references, alone or in any combination, fail to disclose, teach or suggest at least one infrared lamp for emitting infrared radiation, and each of the at least one infrared lamps is mounted near the apparatus for heating the infrared-absorbing material such that infrared radiation from the infrared lamps propagates through the back plate and the heated infrared-absorbing material is a heat-activated adhesive that bonds the plastic front panel and back plate together when cooled without introducing deformities into outer class A surfaces of the plastic front panel, as claimed in amended claim 13.

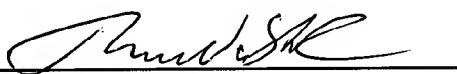
Regarding claims which depend from the independent claims, Applicants contend that these claims are patentable for at least the same reasons that the independent claims are patentable. Moreover, Applicants contend these claims recite further limitations, in addition to the limitations of the independent claims, which render these claims additionally patentable.

Consequently, in view of the above and in the absence of better art, Applicants' representative respectfully submits the application is in condition for allowance which allowance is respectfully requested. No fee is believed to be due for the filing of this paper. Please charge any additional fees or credit any overpayments as a result of the filing of this paper to our Deposit Account No. 02-3978.

The Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to discuss prompt resolution of any remaining issues necessary to place this case in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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By 

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